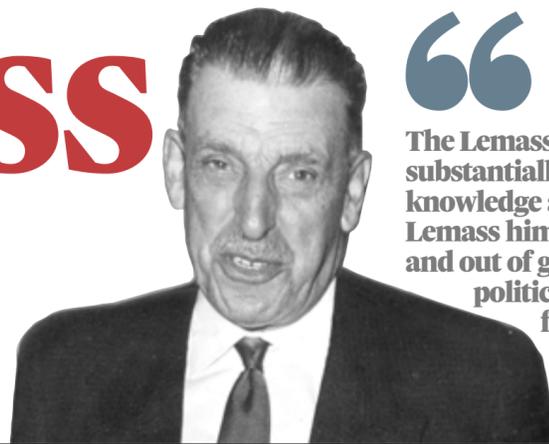


The Lemass Tapes



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The Lemass tapes will substantially re-shape our knowledge and understanding of Lemass himself, of Fianna Fáil in and out of government, and political history in the four decades after 1932

– Lemass biographer John Horgan

Saturday, June 2nd, 2018 Editor: Mark Hennessy

The Lemass family

Back row, left to right: Noel Lemass, John O'Connor, Capt Jack O'Brien, Charles Haughey, Seán Lemass;

Second row: Sean D Lemass, Tina Lemass Nolan (Noel's son and daughter); Eoghan and Donal O'Brien; Eimear Haughey Mulhern.

Seated, extreme left: Peggy O'Brien, Lemass's daughter, holding her son Padraig O'Brien.

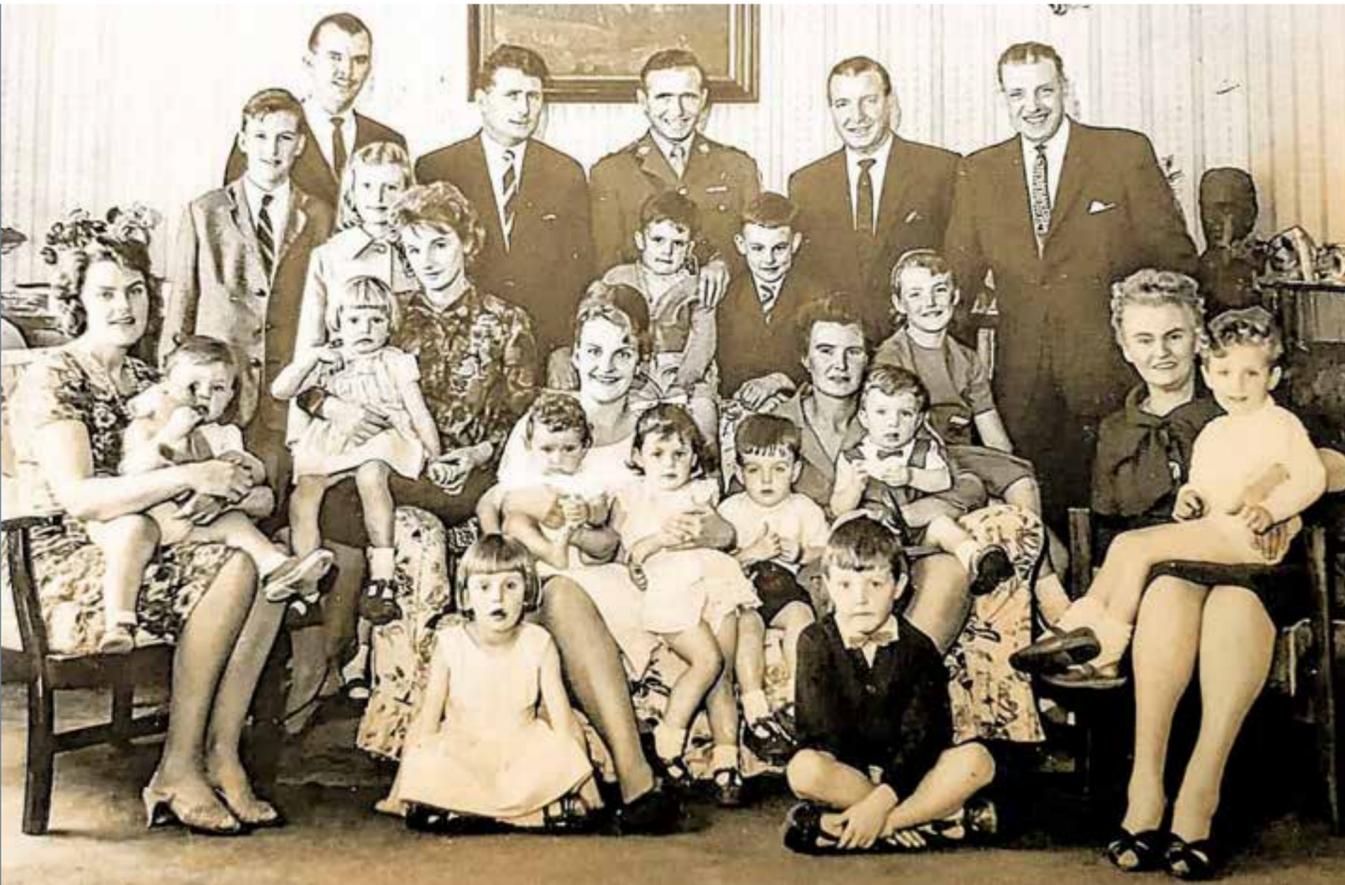
On arm of couch: Eileen Lemass, Noel's wife, with daughter Ailbhe on her knee.

Woman in white dress is Sheila O'Connor, Lemass's daughter, holding her daughter Catriona and son Rory

Maureen Lemass Haughey; her son Seán is sitting on her knee; Ciaran is sitting just beside her; son Conor is sitting cross-legged on the floor

Extreme right, sitting: Kathleen Lemass and Seán O'Connor (on her knee).

The girl sitting on the floor in the white dress is Sinead Lemass.



Lemass, a reluctant taoiseach

Ronan McGreevy

Regarded as Ireland's greatest taoiseach, the FF leader yearned for the simple pleasures

Seán Lemass, who became taoiseach on June 23rd, 1959, at the age of 59, after Eamon de Valera was elected president of Ireland, never wanted the job, he said in now-revealed tapes.

In the end, he spent more than seven years in office and finally retired in November 1966. Today, he is regarded by many as Ireland's greatest taoiseach. His successor, Leo Varadkar, has a portrait of him in his office. Though he never wrote an autobiography, Lemass did sit with the late businessman Dermot Ryan in 1967 for dozens of hours of taped reflections of his life and career.

The tapes, which were handed over by Ryan to the Lemass family four years ago, have now been lodged by Lemass's great-grandson, Aidan O'Connor, with University College Dublin's archive.

Lemass, as *tanáiste* and minister for industry and commerce in the Fianna Fáil government which took office again in 1957, was effectively taoiseach anyway. Eamon de Valera played no part in drawing up the country's first economic programme, which was launched in 1958 – still seen to this day as one of the most important chapters in the State's history.

Lemass's reluctance to be taoiseach did not extend, however, to accepting that any of the Fianna Fáil colleagues he had served with in cabinet should get the job instead of him. He had urged de Valera not to stand for the presidency, suggesting that he should carry on as an "adjudicator" taoiseach, leaving Lemass to do the work: "I would have preferred if time stood still."

Candour

With typical candour, he told Ryan: "I could see no way of avoiding it except by keeping Dev as taoiseach until he died in the expectation that he would not interfere with what I was doing, as he was not interfering anyway."

In the end, he said, he took the job out of a sense of duty when de Valera finally vacated the office at the age of 76. His reluctance, he told Ryan, was motivated



66 I used to have the illusion that I could shed my ministerial personality when I was not doing ministerial work

by entirely selfish reasons. Lemass was a creature of habit. He valued his free time. He liked to play cards and golf. He attended race meetings and was often irritated when political pressures meant he could not.

"For a long time I used to have the illusion that I could shed my ministerial personality when I was not doing ministerial work like walking up the street, you know, as a private citizen. This illusion died slowly but it died and I would have said it was for purely selfish reasons that I did not want to aspire to the office of taoiseach. Life was enjoyable. I had all the work I wanted to do and all the power I wanted to exercise. At the same time, I could have relaxation that was more or less normal and which I assumed would cease to be available as taoiseach."

Lemass loved to go the races on a Saturday but denied he was ever a "serious gambler", though he was dogged with unproven rumours he had large gambling debts, mostly from playing cards.

"It became a habit of mine to go every Saturday to a race meeting. I'd be disgusted if there was no race meeting on because of bad weather or because it was too far out of Dublin," he told Ryan. "But when I became taoiseach I decided that I couldn't do this as it wasn't in conformity with the dignity of my office and it took me a hell of a long time to adjust to the situation."

Later on, Lemass had no regrets about departing from the office of taoiseach: "On the contrary, the only sense I experienced when I was out was relief – free at last of all the responsibilities."

PORTRAIT OF A MAN IN HIGH OFFICE

The tapes, recorded by the late hotelier Dermot Ryan in 1967, are an extraordinary political testament



John Horgan

Old tapes can throw new light on history. Seán Lemass was a politician who never wrote an autobiography, but he left behind an extraordinary series of interviews, now seeing the public light.

In them, Lemass talks candidly about his life and career, Ireland's relationship with Northern Ireland; and, pertinently, Ireland's relationship with the United Kingdom and the latter's relationship with Europe.

The transcribed tapes are an extraordinary political testament, all the more remarkable for not having been written by Lemass himself, but recorded by one of his political admirers, the late hotelier and businessman Dermot Ryan.

Political memoirs often disappoint. Lemass's son-in-law, Charles J Haughey, once told an entreating publisher that he had never read a good one. Reminded of the record left by British cabinet minister Denis Healey, Haughey was dismissive: "He never got the top job."

Paradoxically, the fact that Lemass never wrote a memoir, but did get the "top job" after he took over from Eamon de Valera in 1957, makes the Ryan recordings possibly even more valuable than if he had put pen to paper himself.

Of course, there are omissions. The most striking are the years before Fianna Fáil entered the Dáil, and particularly the Civil War. But Lemass had obviously taken a Trappist vow in relation to this troubled

get, one of universal relevance to students of politics.

Women play little role in the recordings, but that is hardly surprising given the time and Lemass's need to keep the then most powerful, and largely male, trade unions politically on-side.

Remarkable

Omissions notwithstanding, these transcripts – edited by Lemass himself – of almost two dozen interviews, many of them very lengthy, are remarkable both in style and in substance.

Lemass was an autodidact who left formal education in 1916, but he read copiously and continuously, particularly in economics, and his style was lapidary, evident not only in these recollections. His amendments are brief, but always significant.

Even more significantly, there is a cornucopia of judgments innocent of defensiveness, self-glorification, or hubris, particularly relevant about his own immaturity as an emerging politician and his dawning realisation that dialogue was a necessary adjunct to political power.

In this sense, these recollections will undoubtedly re-shape the history of the decades between 1930 and 1970 in significant ways, particularly about the mistakes made. He notes at one point: "We misjudged the economic climate a great deal."

On the other hand, he is brusque, sometimes critical – dismissive, even – about political allies as well as political opponents. His frustrations with de Valera between 1945 and 1957 are evident.

"At one time he [De Valera] was the initiator of policy, but this had ceased by 1948 or thereabout. He then became the arbitrator... he never asked why you did anything; new ideas did not come from him at all."

His descriptions of difficult Dáil situations not only exemplify his skill as a tactician, but also significant differences between himself and de Valera. "I could sit for hours in the Dáil and listen to raimeís from Dillon, or speeches from Labour, without showing on my face any obvious reaction... Dev could be provoked very easily. He rose to every bait. I used to say this to him and implore him to ignore the traps... I think the opportunity to suffer fools gladly is something you can only learn from experience."

He is scathing about the Labour Party and, in particular, its opposition to the purchase of aircraft for the transatlantic route (one of his pet projects). Nor does he spare gadflies like Noel Browne and Jack McQuillan, no doubt at least in part because they provided a two-man opposition to Fianna Fáil at a time when Fine Gael was in the doldrums, but also probably because their speaking style was the direct ob-

verse of Lemass's clipped, economical delivery. Browne, he remarked "is a queer fellow. He had ideas, but he bored everyone by talking far too much in the Dáil." Both Browne and McQuillan, "used to work fairly hard in preparing their stuff, but if they condensed it into shorter speeches they would have won far more respect".

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At one time he [De Valera] was the initiator of policy... He then became arbitrator... he never asked why you did anything; new ideas did not come from him at all"

What are the Lemass tapes?

Interviews with Seán Lemass were carried out by Dermot Ryan, a well-known Irish businessman of the 1960s who had interests in hotels, caravan parks, car hire and insurance. He was also a member of the Fianna Fáil National Executive.

An *Irish Times* profile in 1969 estimated his wealth at £2.5 million (€35 million). In that profile, he said of Lemass: "That man could have been a millionaire many times over if he had devoted

his talents to business. I have never known a man with such intelligence, judgement and integrity as Lemass and who made such little money from his activities."

There are 23 interviews in total, consisting of 22 hours of recordings and 1,200 pages of transcript.

The first interview was conducted on April 12th, 1967, and the last on January 9th, 1969. They cover Lemass's career from 1923 to his retirement from

politics. Ryan makes clear from the beginning he intended to write a book "with the emphasis on the new Ireland, the modern Ireland".

No book was ever written and attempts by various authors to use the materials in the intervening years were unsuccessful. In 2014, Ryan handed over the tapes and transcripts to the extended Lemass family who have now deposited them with UCD archives. –R McG

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Scathing

Nor, indeed, does he spare his own. He is scathing about Fianna Fáil minister for agriculture Paddy Smith. Jack Lynch "would have been less inclined to fight [the Department of Finance] than I would"; Seán MacEntee was "very slow" to take decisions, and other (sadly, unnamed) ministerial colleagues also "had a complete reluctance to take decisions, who suffered from a mental process recognised as a difficulty in passing the boundary line between consideration and decision".

His voracious reading is displayed lightly, not least when, in what is almost an aside about the 1957 election, he picked up John A Costello's comparison of de Valera to Machiavelli. "Machiavelli had laid down the principle in one of his writings that the unpopular things had to be done straightaway and the benefits should be doled out, one by one, over a longer period. He was right: that was what we decided to do."

His comments on Stalin, Trotsky and others – notably Adenauer, whose political ability he greatly respected – always display an original level of analysis and insight.

In the light of current events, his observations on the UK's attitude to Europe help to illuminate contemporary debates. Labour had been more difficult to deal with than the Tories in the post-war period, he notes, because they (Labour) were more vulnerable to pro-empire rhetoric from the Tory side, and this did not really change until Harold Wilson became prime minister.

Independent TDs are dismissed, derisively, while his revelations about the internal cabinet discussions on the abolition of proportional representation fascinate. The Fianna Fáil cabinet might have backed PR in single-seat constituencies, but could not do so because of de Valera's prior public commitment to the "straight" vote, from which he could not resile.

The Lemass tapes will substantially re-shape our knowledge and understanding of Lemass himself, of Fianna Fáil in and out of government, and political history in the four decades after 1932. Ever frank throughout, Lemass is wryly

'I think there is a political advantage in having a certain anti-clerical tinge'

Catholic Church

Ronan McGreevy

Lemass believed his row with bishop of Galway led to his 'enormous vote' in the 1944 general election

Seán Lemass may have lived during a time when the Catholic Church was dominant in Irish society, but, nevertheless, he always believed there was a strong sense of anti-clericalism in the Irish people.

In the Lemass tapes, the former taoiseach recounted a major row he had with the bishop of Galway, Dr Michael Browne, who was never slow in delivering instructions to the political classes.

It followed on foot of the publication of a 1944 report led by Browne into the now

rather arcane concept of vocationalism, which generated a great deal of interest in Ireland during the period.

First articulated by Pope Pius XI in his 1931 papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, vocationalism presented a road map for how Catholics could order their society and avoid the extremes of fascism and communism.

Eight years after the papal encyclical, Eamon de Valera commissioned his own inquiry into vocationalism in the months before the start of the second World War.

However, the 1944 report from the combative bishop of Galway, which was critical of the government and the Civil Service, arrived as a bombshell in government departments. It warned of the State's "despotic control of production and labour". Lemass took this criticism personally, as his own department had taken draconian emergency measures during the war to control the economy.

Fiercely denouncing the report publicly as a "slovenly document", Lemass said the work was "querulous, nagging and propagandist" – extraordinary language for a



Archbishop of Cashel Dr Thomas Morris, President Éamon de Valera, Cardinal D'Alton and then taoiseach Seán Lemass, in 1960. PHOTOGRAPH: GORDON STANDING

politician at the time.

Exchanged insults

Browne responded indignantly and the two exchanged insults in a series of letters in the *Irish Press*. However, Lemass believed his stand against the bishop was

very popular throughout the country.

"I think there is a political advantage in having a certain anti-clerical tinge," Lemass remembered. "The only time in my life that I ever got an enormous vote, the highest vote ever accorded to any candidate in a general election was when I was

having a full-scale row with the bishop of Galway and this was dominating the political scene and I found this on other occasions too – that having a good row with the bishop is quite a political asset and you do not suffer politically for it because there is an anti-clericalism in the Irish people."

Lemass may be referring to the 1944 general election in which he got almost a

“My relationship with all the principal archbishops and cardinal was always very good”

third of the vote in the Dublin South constituency. Lemass said in his time as a politician, "I never had any difficulty at all either with Dr [John Charles] McQuaid or the cardinal [John D'Alton].

Lemass put McQuaid in charge of a commission on youth unemployment. It recommended the school leaving age be increased. When Lemass pointed out that would mean building new schools and em-

ploying new teachers, McQuaid withdrew the report.

Lemass does not mention the spat between McQuaid, Lemass and de Valera. McQuaid refused, as chair of the committee, to take submissions from Protestant organisations and offered to resign if he had to. De Valera called his bluff and refused to back down.

Lemass said of his relationship with the clergy: "I do not remember having any difficulty, sense of strain or problems in dealing with the church. My personal relationship with all the principal archbishops and the cardinal was always very good.

"Whenever I wanted advice about anything there was never the slightest suggestion that they felt it was their duty to impose any point of view upon us. I could have been lucky, nothing emerged in my time that would have raised a conflict. I can only testify on my personal experience in that regard."

Lemass had little time for Noel Browne, the minister at the centre of the infamous Mother and Baby Scheme which was stymied by the Catholic bishops.



MEETING WITH O'NEILL MET STIFF OPPOSITION

Historic meeting with Northern Ireland PM uncovered 'bare, hard-rock prejudices'

Ronan McGreevy

Ever the pragmatist, Seán Lemass had no objections when the prime minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O'Neill, invited him to travel to a snowy Belfast to meet on January 14th, 1965. Speaking to Dermot Ryan, he said: "Now I could have said to O'Neill that the first meeting must be in Dublin, but I felt that this would be all wrong, because it would appear to be capitulation on his part."

This historic visit, which had been arranged by two of the most senior civil servants from both jurisdictions, Ken Whitaker and Jim Malley, was the first time since partition that leaders from both sides of the Border met.

Backed by constitutional imperatives

and public opinion, successive governments in the Republic had refused to recognise the North, leaving Lemass and those desiring greater co-operation with dilemmas.

Lemass had begun to lay the grounds for his visit to Belfast two years earlier in a speech in Tralee in 1963, where he had made the case that greater ties would benefit all.

One did not have to officially recognise Northern Ireland to acknowledge the reality that "partition had persisted for 40 years; there was no immediate prospect that the situation would end", he told Ryan.

The South had given little consideration to the reality of partition, Lemass believed, and the idea of compelling the unionist majority to accept a united Ireland was "an unrealistic approach that would never succeed".

Instead, he had reached the conclusion that any attempt to coerce unionists into a united Ireland would create a huge problem for the Irish state. He told Dermot Ryan: "I could see it as almost a disease which would ultimately destroy the nation, and I therefore began to talk about unity as a spiritual and not a political conception".

He saw the meeting with O'Neill as simply reflecting "that there were problems of an all-Ireland kind which an all-Ireland effort could more easily solve than separate efforts".

Nobody who was interested in ending partition, he reasoned, could "possibly raise objections to what appeared to be the first breaking down of the barriers between the six counties and here".

Lemass believed O'Neill had called the historic meeting between the two premiers because he was conscious that the image of Northern Ireland had taken a battering in the world. O'Neill recognised that the North could not move forward without an improvement in community relations.

This would prove to be prescient, given the outbreak of the Troubles four years later. O'Neill recognised there needed to be "greater harmony between the two elements in the population and an acceptance of the need for co-operation in the six counties, including the nationalists."

Difficulties over this historic meeting were all O'Neill's, Lemass said. He faced opposition from the "Paisley element", as Lemass put it.

"As we dug down deeper, of course, we came upon the bare, hard-rock prejudices which have always been there."

Indeed Paisley and his supporters pelted Lemass's car with snowballs as it left Stormont.

No constitutional issues

There was no talk during his meeting with O'Neill of any constitutional or political issues. It was followed by a reciprocal meeting the following month in Dublin, but Lemass said that meeting was not of much consequence as it was more a courtesy visit and no issues of consequence were dis-

Capt Terence O'Neill and Seán Lemass with their wives at Iveagh House in Dublin. PHOTOGRAPH: JOE CLARKE

cussed. The meetings between the two premiers were warmly welcomed by many on both sides of the Border. "Immediately after my meeting with O'Neill, I received an enormous flood of letters from Protestants and Presbyterian clergymen in the North expressing their satisfaction at the turn of events and expressing a sense of release from old compulsions not to consort with Catholics," Lemass recalled.

He believed O'Neill had received similar messages of support, but many in the unionist community were not happy. "The Paisley element came on the scene and the backbench people began to feel that they might have been jeopardising some of their support by these approaches.

Subsequently, many Unionist MPs were targeted because of their support for O'Neill's policy towards the South.

Lemass also spoke of his attempts to persuade the Nationalist Party in the North that they should participate in the Northern Ireland parliament.

Prior to the Troubles, the Nationalist Party was the main political voice for northern nationalists.

Lemass told Nationalist Party leader Eddie McAteer that any solution to partition would involve keeping the Stormont Parliament in place as part of a federalised united Ireland.

Therefore it was in the Nationalist Party's interest to make the parliament work. Lemass said McAteer agreed with his assessment and became the main opposition in Stormont in 1965.

* The Nationalist Party did not enter the House of Commons of Northern Ireland until 1924, having won six seats in the general election of 1921. Thereafter, it again engaged in long periods of abstention, to protest against the "illegal" partition of Ireland. In 1965, it agreed to become the official opposition party in the House of Commons

British reneged on wartime deal over tea supplies

Emergency

Ronan McGreevy

Lemass went to extraordinary lengths to ensure Ireland got provisions during war

The British government "double-crossed" Ireland during the second World War when it reneged on a promise that Ireland would be able to import the same quantities of tea per head.

The Irish were obsessed with the tea ration during the second World War, forcing Lemass to go to extraordinary lengths to source it, even though it was, arguably, the least important of the food imports needed.

The trouble for Lemass was that the British controlled the supply of tea for most of the war. Dublin and London had come to an agreement at the start of the war that both countries would receive the same per-capita ration of tea.

Lemass complained that the British reneged on the deal by announcing that the Irish would only be entitled to a quarter-ounce of tea per person while the British would retain their ounce per person.

The British would not give the Irish a navy certificate to collect tea from the warehouses in Calcutta, so Lemass sought to get around the effective British embargo by hiring an American ship.

The tea was taken via the Panama Canal to New York and then sent by train to St John's, Newfoundland. It was transported across the Atlantic by one of the Irish merchant navy ships, the *Irish Poplar*.

Having made a perilous journey across the Atlantic dodging German U-boats, the ship arrived with its precious cargo into Dublin Port only to be diverted to Waterford because of a lightning strike at the docks.

"We were able to keep the one ounce of tea ration by and large during the whole war and people regarded this as quite an achievement (which it was) because they assumed there would be no tea," Lemass remembered.

Acute dilemma

The war provided an acute dilemma for Ireland, which was critically dependent on Britain for its shipping and Lemass sensed the British were trying to exercise some control over the Irish government by restricting the supply of shipping.

Lemass and his principal secretary John Leydon realised in 1940 that they could not depend upon the British to charter shipping on their behalf so they set about putting together an Irish fleet in the middle of the war.

They scoured Europe for vessels and bought a Greek ship that was in such an advanced state of decrepitude that its crew could not even sink her for insurance purposes. It became the *Irish Poplar*. They sourced other ships

from the Estonians and Latvians who had been invaded by Soviet Russia and another from Italy, though Italy was one of the Axis powers.

The government had stockpiled coffee before the war from Brazil in anticipation there would be no tea. By the end of the war, the government had in stock 40 years' supply of coffee, which was then sold abroad at a considerable loss to the State.

The supply of petrol was another source of aggravation for Lemass during the war. On Christmas Eve 1942, a huge oil tanker carrying 15,000 tonnes of petrol arrived in Dublin Port with much-needed petrol supplies. Lemass said the country was so short of petrol at the time that he contemplated cutting the ration to a half gallon per motorist.

If the ship docked, he could increase the ration to two gallons for each motorist. The ship was so laden with oil that it couldn't clear the bar at Dublin Port. It was sent to Liverpool to unload several thousand tonnes of oil. Unfortunately, it was sunk by a German submarine on its passage across the Irish Sea, leaving the country in straitened circumstances again.

Lemass was famous for his scrupulous adherence to the ration regime he created, which included even his own family. Lemass said rationing worked in Ireland because it was perceived to have been fairly applied.

Lemass made his reputation as one of the most energetic and able of government ministers by his handling of the issue of supplies, for which he had been given authority by Eamon de Valera at the start of the war.

He outlined his philosophy as fol-

“Lemass was famous for his adherence to the ration regime he created which included even his own family ... he said rationing worked because it was perceived to have been fairly applied”

lowing to his interviewer Dermot Ryan: "I said at one time in the Dáil that if the necessity arose for me to make an order prohibiting men wearing trousers, the public would accept this until the day they saw one man wearing trousers."

He said he was "truthless" in dealing with black marketeers and those who abused the system. Doctors were given an extra ration of petrol to attend to their patients.

Ten doctors' cars were found outside Portmarnock golf course by an inspector. When the inspector queried what they were doing, they all responded that they were attending to a woman in a nearby cottage. They all had their petrol rations withdrawn and their cars taken away for a period.

"A lot of these were some of the most prominent and well-known doctors in Dublin. Eventually, they got their rations back, but it was the appearance of enforcing this impartially that mattered."

IRA infiltrated by British secret service, Lemass said

IRA campaign

Ronan McGreevy

Taoiseach believed 1939 campaign was masterminded by British agents

The IRA, which carried out a series of bombing attacks in England before the opening of the second World War, had been infiltrated by "ultra-conservative sections of the British secret service", Seán Lemass believed.

Lemass accused the IRA of scuppering attempts by the Irish government to open a line of dialogue with the Stormont government over the issue of partition.

The bombing campaign which began in 1939 was the "most disastrous thing that could have happened", he declared, and so contrary to Irish interests that it could only have been the work of British agents.

In 1938, the British prime minister, the Conservative Neville Chamberlain, stated that Britain would not oppose the unification of Ireland if the Irish people wanted it.

The declaration was considered as significant by taoiseach Eamon de Valera. Prior to that, it had been assumed that the British wished to retain Northern Ireland

out of self-interest. De Valera, Lemass maintained, developed a "tremendous respect" for Chamberlain and believed much of the criticism directed at Chamberlain over his policy of appeasement was unfair. Lemass said the IRA bombing campaign, which began in Britain in January 1939, was "so contrary to Irish interests at the time that I always suspected that the British secret service was behind it, that the IRA had been infiltrated by some secret service man who was opposed to this idea [of ending partition]".

'Declaration of war'

The IRA bombing campaign began with the targeting of border posts in November 1938. This was followed by a "declaration of war" in January 1939 and by bombs shortly afterwards in London and Manchester. In August 1939, just five days before the second World War broke out, an IRA bomb in Coventry killed five civilians.



“De Valera interned 800 IRA men and women during the war. Lemass believed the decision was correct one”

The campaign petered out after that.

Lemass told his interviewer Dermot Ryan he was "deeply suspicious of the whole business and indeed both then and for quite a long time afterwards. I held the idea that the IRA was undoubtedly being influenced by some hostile element of that

kind. It always seemed to become active whenever it suited this ultra-conservative element in Great Britain that it should become active, or did the very things that were going to destroy whatever hopes were emerging from our political activities."

Lemass advances no evidence in his interviews to back up his assertion that the IRA had been infiltrated.

During the second World War, Lemass admitted the de Valera government was concerned that the IRA would make contact with the Germans and would behave in a manner which would see the British take action against Ireland.

De Valera interned 800 IRA men and women during the war. Lemass believed the decision was the correct one. "This was not necessary merely to prevent their being able to do anything effective, but it was also necessary as a sort of indication of our intention not to allow them to do anything effective."

Lemass said the 1940 approach by the British in relation to the issue of partition was not sincere. The British offered an end to partition if the Irish joined in the British war effort, but the Irish government insisted on an end to partition first.

Lemass conceded that the attitudes of both governments in relation to partition were "unrealistic" and that the Irish government was wrong in its assertion that it was up to the British government to end partition. "In fact, there is no end to partition unless the people in the North are prepared to accept whatever arrangements are made," Lemass told Dermot Ryan.



A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TWO DE VALERAS

Unstinting admiration for Fianna Fáil leader's early achievements turned to frustration and anger as an ageing de Valera clung to power



Ronan McGreevy

The relationship between Éamon de Valera and Seán Lemass is arguably the most important relationship between two Irish politicians in the history of the State. Between them, they were taoiseach (though the office was not known as that until 1937) for all but six years between 1932 to 1966.

They were contrasting men. The stereotype of de Valera as the romantic dreamer and Lemass as the bustling pragmatist are not that far removed from Lemass's own observations as to how their relationship worked.

They also had contrasting styles of leadership. Lemass was famous for his impatience, which supporters interpreted as his desire to get things done. This was evident in cabinet meetings where de Valera would "always let the argument go on" until there was unanimity. Lemass eschewed such an approach and would shut down discussions at cabinet once a majority was reached.

De Valera never set up cabinet subcommittees so arguments would go on for hours into the evening.

"These extended from the morning to the evening, and sometimes to the night and all these things were argued out," Lemass recalled. "We would give in just for the sake of getting the thing finished, one way or the other."

For Lemass, there were two de Valeras. The first was the charismatic politician who led the Republican movement to government and the 16 years of unbroken rule from 1932 to 1948. The second was the de Valera post-1948.

Lemass is unstinting in his admiration of de Valera's early years as Fianna Fáil leader and taoiseach. Nobody but Dev, he believed, could have brought the defeated anti-Treaty side from pariah status after the Civil War to government within 10 years.

'Fervent honesty'

Lemass recognised his own limitations in inspiring people as de Valera had done. De Valera had a "fervent honesty" which chimed with people. De Valera had a capacity "to be able to stand up in the rain and talk for an hour on the simplest terms to them, which I could never do."

"Paying no attention to the rain or anything else, spelling everything out in the simplest terms to them, going back over it again and again if he thought they hadn't understood it. Now that extraordinary loyalty and enthusiasm that he engendered was partially down to this – simplicity, I suppose is the word for it. Lack of sophistication anyway."

He praises the younger de Valera for having been clear-sighted in the big political issues of the day. This allowed de Valera to demolish the Treaty within three to four years, ending with the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in 1938.

"This was real political genius of the highest order which nobody else would have been capable of – anyone else would have put a foot wrong, or would have been tough when it was unwise to be weak."

"He was able to walk the middle course all the time to take advantage of every opportunity that emerged and eventually created a situation where five years after he became head of the government again the Treaty was dead and without any ill effects even in the matter of the relationship with Great Britain."

Though he demurred in all politics, Lemass admitted he had "furious" rows with de Valera on economic policy and he wouldn't "subordinate my judgment at all".

Things changed after Fianna Fáil was voted out of office in 1948 by an inter-party coalition led by Fine Gael. This was a shock to Fianna Fáil, which had been in government for 16 consecutive years.

Lemass noted that after 1948, de Valera became unfocused and lost a lot of his old drive. In 1948, he was 66, but remained on as Fianna Fáil leader until 1959.

Lemass was 17 years younger than de Valera and his natural successor. There was "never any question in anybody's mind that when Dev went I was going to step into his place" yet he felt unable to remove the great totem from office.

"In the 1950s, I began to realise that Dev was losing his grip, that he was no longer the man he had been," Lemass recalled.

"I sometimes got impatient at the incapacity of the government under his leadership to do things that had to be done, the defects of co-ordination in government."

"But, insofar as I had any desire, on my part, to become taoiseach, it was just a conviction that, where the organisation and administration of the government was concerned, I could do a better job than he was doing at the time."

De Valera had two spells as taoiseach in the 1950s – the first time between 1951 and 1954, the second from 1957 until his retirement from the office in 1959.

Lemass is withering in his criticism of de Valera's last term as taoiseach. "In practice, Dev had long ceased to be a leader in the full sense of the term," he told his interviewer Dermot Ryan.

"Up to that time he was the driving force in solving all our political problems. He was always pressing for action in the fields in which he considered it was needed. After a time, this changed and he became, as I suppose people of his age-bracket always tend to become, a man to whom you brought ideas – he became the judge of other people's ideas rather than the initiator of them himself."

Cold fury
Lemass's frustration with de Valera



Then taoiseach Seán Lemass and president Éamon De Valera signing the proclamation to dissolve Dáil Éireann, in 1965. PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

turned to cold fury in 1959 when de Valera announced his candidacy for the presidency.

Lemass expected de Valera to step down immediately as taoiseach, but he didn't. De Valera remained as taoiseach even while he campaigned for the presidency.

"I felt there was a suggestion he was going up for election as president and if he did not win he was going to remain on as taoiseach," he said.

"I felt that from the point of view of running the election team and exercising authority I should have been made taoiseach as soon as he announced his candidacy."

"He should have given the public appearance of burning his boats so that people would say, 'if he is not president, he is nothing'. I felt a certain feeling of frustration that I was sitting around, designated as taoiseach, but not active or effective as such."

"It was only on the eve of the poll that he announced his resignation as taoiseach. It would have been wiser for him, both from the electioneering point of view and from the party point of view to have resigned as taoiseach as soon as he went out campaigning."

"I would have preferred if he hadn't been the candidate. This was despite the fact that perhaps, more than anyone else, I recognised he had passed the point of no return of being effective as a party leader."

"The whole management of the party was left to me, Dáil business was left to me, he didn't intervene at all. I was concerned with the formulation of the economic policy. The preparation of the first programme was left to me. He didn't intervene."

"He never asked why you did anything; new ideas did not come from him at all."

“After a time, he became, as I suppose people of his age-bracket always tend to become, a man to whom you brought ideas – he became the judge of other people's ideas rather than the initiator of them himself”

Sinn Féin obsession with dismantling Treaty led to birth of Fianna Fáil

Fianna Fáil's emergence

Ronan McGreevy

The old Sinn Féin had 'collected all the cranks in the country', said Lemass

A victorious Fianna Fáil party in 1932 feared they would be subject to an army coup led by a man allegedly responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the Civil War, Seán Lemass believed.

The party won 72 seats – five seats short of a majority – in the February 1932 general election, supplanting, with the support of the Labour Party, the Cumann na nGaedheal government, which had held power for 10 years.

However, there was a long hiatus between the election and the new Dáil because of the murder of a Cumann na nGaedheal deputy Patrick Reynolds in Sligo-Leitrim two days before polling. His widow later won the seat.

In the Lemass tapes, Lemass said Paddy Daly, a former army colonel, had circulated a document among his fellow army officers stating they should not allow their jobs

and pension be taken from them. Daly had been a brigadier in the National Army which landed at Fenit, Co Kerry, to put down anti-Treaty insurgencies during the Civil War. He was widely blamed for the notorious Ballyseedy massacre in March 1923 in which eight anti-Treaty prisoners were tied to a landmine and blown up. Only one survived.

Lemass said Daly had urged his fellow officers to rise up against the incoming government as they would otherwise lose their commissions and their pensions.

Fianna Fáil had made the abolition of the military pensions to men who had served with the pro-Treaty forces during and after the Civil War part of their election manifesto.

The pensions, brought into being in 1924, were only for those who had served in the National Army and were not available to those who had taken the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.

Lemass recalled there was a "very strong sentiment among some of the army officers and guards officers that they shouldn't allow themselves to be run out of office. They thought they were going to be sacked straightaway."

He added that Ernest Blythe, the minister for finance, would have supported an army coup, but the president of the Executive Council and effective taoiseach, WT Cosgrave, would not go along with it. "It was certainly strong enough to cause

concern," Lemass remembered. "The danger developed after the election when it was clear that we were to become the government."

"Whoever was responsible, we all had our own armed guards given to us straightaway. We were far more afraid of the armed guards than we were of the people who were likely to attack us. I can tell you that, but it was an indication that they knew there was a danger of some attempt on us."

Lemass speaks at length of the process of the split in Sinn Féin, which led to the setting up of Fianna Fáil in 1926.

Lemass was elected to the Sinn Féin Ardchomhairle in 1923. He was just 23 and it occurred during the funeral of his brother Captain Noel Lemass, whose body was found in October 1923 in the Dublin Mountains. It had been suspected that his murder was carried out by Free State agents.

"There was no one more astonished than myself when I was elected," he recalled. "It was purely an emotional response – nobody knew anything about me, or anything of that kind."

Even then, he said Sinn Féin president Éamon de Valera was getting impatient with people within the movement who wanted to dismantle every aspect of the Treaty. "There was a lot of nonsense associated with the old Sinn Féin organisation," Lemass remembered. "It had collected all



“Fianna Fáil's victory in 1932 election was not its anti-Treaty stance, but the state of the economy – ‘the appalling economic conditions, the sense of doom.’”

the cranks in the country and there were people making speeches in favour of vegetarianism and the single tax, all sorts of queer cranks."

He gives de Valera credit for bringing the republican movement together after the Civil War and into a position of government. "I'd say this was de Valera's greatest achievement. I mean, look over the whole of his career. 1916 to 1921, a lot of it would have happened if de Valera hadn't been there at all. The same would apply from 1932... But I'd say nobody but him could have got the Republican movement, in the atmosphere of the 1920s, back to a state of reality so effectively that within a few years

we were elected by the people as a government, by a majority."

Lemass said he came to the realisation early that a resumption of military action after the Civil War by the anti-Treaty side would be "not merely impossible but detrimental".

"Instead of succeeding, it would destroy us and that we could do nothing until we had public support for our policies."

Lemass maintained the Irish public were "intellectually" anti-Treaty but had voted in favour of it in 1922 for the sake of peace. He is candid that the anti-Treaty IRA did not do enough to convince the public of their career. "The IRA in the Civil War made the tremendous mistake, the fundamental mistake, of forgetting the importance of public opinion."

"They were being told by the papers that the people of the country were all in favour of the Treaty, which wasn't true, but having accepted this, they began to adopt an attitude of hostility or indifference to public opinion – to keeping public opinion on their side."

'Traitors and blackguards'

He said Fianna Fáil came to the realisation that it would never get a majority if it characterised those who voted in favour of the Treaty as "traitors and blackguards" and that they needed to reach out to pro-Treaty supporters.

He credits a Cumann na nGaedheal dep-

Return of ports vital to Irish neutrality

Treaty ports

Ronan McGreevy

Britain handed back ports under mistaken belief radar alone could detect German submarines

Britain handed back the Treaty ports in 1938 based on a false belief that their technological advances would stop German submarines, Seán Lemass believed.

Under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, Britain had retained the use of the ports of Berehaven and Cobh in Co Cork and Lough Swilly in Co Donegal for the Royal Navy.

However, the ports were handed back to the Free State in 1938 as part of the settlement which ended the Anglo-Irish trade war that had devastated Irish agriculture.

The decision to hand back the Treaty ports was widely accepted in Britain and Ireland, but bitterly opposed by future British prime minister Winston Churchill. Speaking at the time, Churchill described the Treaty ports as the "sentinel towers of the western approaches" in the North Atlantic. It was "folly", Churchill believed, to give them back with a war looming.

Lemass recalled that during the negotiations to end the economic war, Britain feared the loss of the ports would leave them vulnerable to German submarines operating in the Atlantic.

All this changed, however, during negotiations with Thomas Inskip, who served a minister for coordination of defence in the British government between 1936 and 1939.

“UK no longer concerned about their anti-submarine defences or possession of ports in Ireland”

Inskip, a key figure in the United Kingdom's then preparations for a looming war with Germany, believed London had developed a new sonar device which could locate submarines under the water.

Lemass remembered: "This meant the elimination of the submarine as an instrument of war, so they were no longer concerned about their anti-submarine defences or their possession of ports in Ireland or the danger to them of Germans getting re-fuelled in Irish ports, and so that was that."

Of course, this proved to be completely wrong in the end: radar was certainly a useful device, but the German submarine still became the greatest menace they had during the war."

Crippling economic war

The Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement ended the crippling economic war between Britain and the Free State which arose out of the decision by the Fianna Fáil government in 1933 to stop paying land annuities to the British government arising out of the pre-independence land Acts.

It was settled with a once-off payment of £10 million by the Irish government. Lemass said the money was of "no importance". The return of the Treaty ports, though, was vital as it turned out to preserve Irish neutrality during the second World War.

The trade treaty also abolished all tariffs between the two countries. Lemass believed the ability of Irish farmers to trade on the same terms as British farmers in the British market would lead to a boom in Irish agriculture.

Unfortunately, the war intervened. Lemass described the war as a "disaster" for the Irish economy as the British introduced war-time controls on the importations of food stuffs a year later and kept them in place for 10 years.

The former taoiseach's takes on the British, colleagues, world leaders and himself

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LEMASS

Harold Macmillan and UK's EEC membership

"I do not think that either Macmillan or any member of the British government ever fully understood that they could not be half in and half out of the EEC. They had to make up their minds whether Britain was to be a part of a united Europe and, if so, they would have to resign themselves to the fact that they could not have a special relationship with the US which would give them rights and privileges against their Common Market partners or try to maintain the Commonwealth preferences. Macmillan did not realise that indication of vacillation on Britain's part would discredit its application in the eyes of de Gaulle. As a result, I think he was surprised by the de Gaulle veto."

British attitudes to Europe

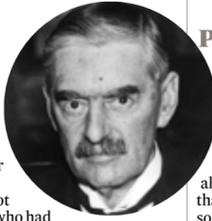
"I do not think they had any other idea initially in relation to the Common Market, except to destroy it. Even when they recognised they were not going to succeed in breaking it up, their application for membership was probably inspired by the idea that they could slow down its development in some way and perhaps change its character. It is the only in the last few years that the British have realised that they are not going to succeed in these policies. They have come around – if their public declarations are indicative of their attitude – to accepting the whole idea of European economic integration. Yet they still have the imperial frame of mind as shown by their Commonwealth prime ministers' conferences. Of what real importance is the Commonwealth? I do not think it has any significance whatsoever, but it certainly has prevented the British from thinking of themselves as a completely European country."

Ireland's attitude to EEC and military alliances

"I have always felt strongly that when Europe is integrated economically we cannot stay out and that once it develops political institutions it will be impossible to have common commercial policies without common political policies. Once we are in the area of common political policies, we must have a common defence policy. When I was taoiseach I said several times we were not neutral although we were not a member of any military alliance. In any conflict between East and West, we will always be on the side of the West. Ireland will side with democracy against any socialist or totalitarian system."

Neville Chamberlain

"I remember Chamberlain well. He was a dry sort of character, but he had a sense of humour, you could get a spark of humour out of him, even though he did not look like a man who had a sense of humour until you probed deeper. I will say there was a lot of unfair criticism of Chamberlain on the grounds that he tried to keep peace with Hitler and Mussolini and he probably was unwise to come back from Munich waving his bit of paper and saying, 'this means peace in our



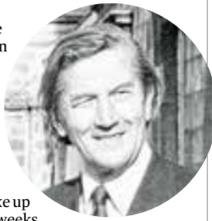
day'. But, in fact, Britain was not prepared for war at the time, neither physically nor morally and a lot of preparations for war and of this Munich agreement came from people on the Labour side in Britain who had been fiercely opposing the rearmament programme. He did gain them a year in which they were able to improve their armaments, particularly their air force, which made it possible for them to win the war."

Clement Atlee

"[He] was a peculiar type of person in that he rarely spoke but he had a capacity to listen and listen with every appearance of following every word you were saying intelligently and sympathetically. [He] asked me to call and see him at 10 Downing Street. He wanted to know how things were in Ireland and it took me an hour to list them. During this time he hardly spoke but I never had the feeling he was bored."

Noel Browne

"[He] was the type of person who could never see anyone's opinion except his own. The party [National Labour] broke up within a few weeks because of a disagreement between Browne and somebody else. It was a most unnatural and unusual combination. Nobody expected it to last. He was a queer fellow. He had ideas, but he bored everyone by talking far too much in the Dáil. Now every effort is being made to restore Browne's reputation by the leftists in RTE and people like that but he does not count and never will count."

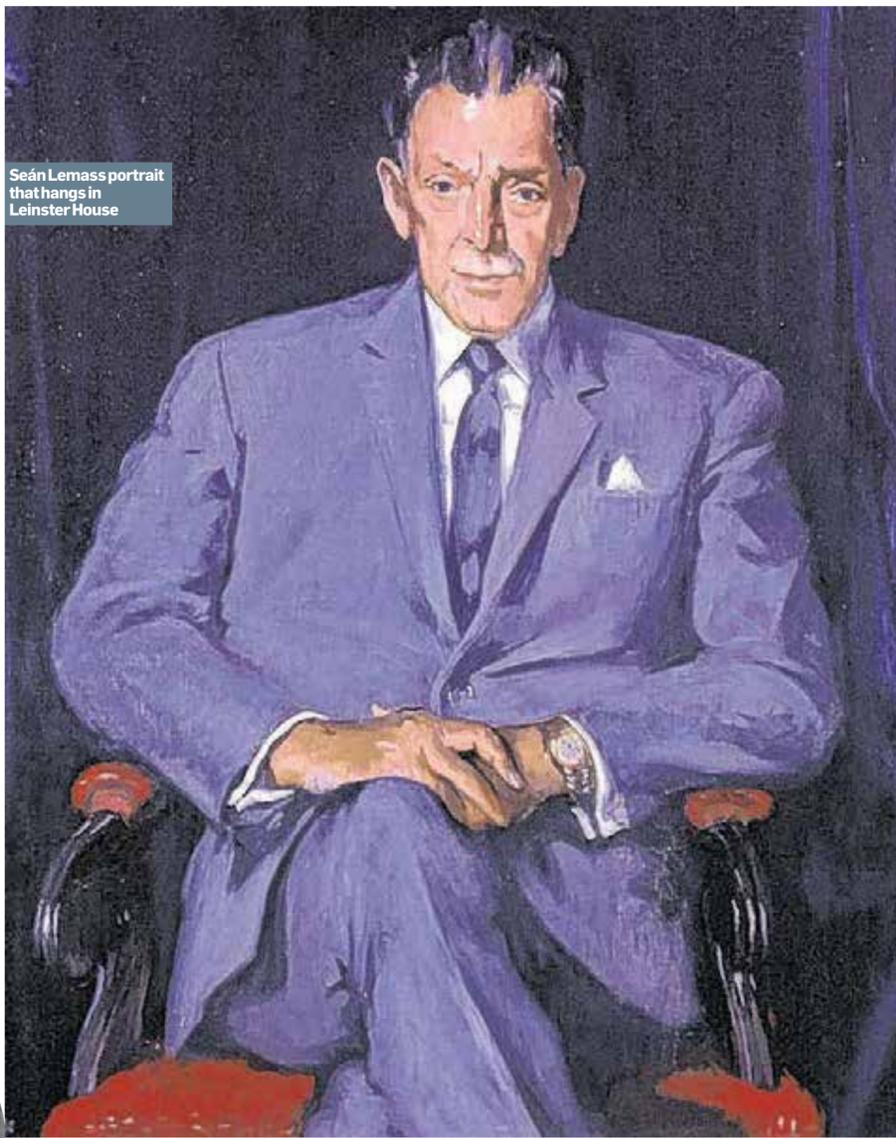


Seán MacBride

"When Nato was formed in 1948, a letter was sent to the government here – to MacBride – asking did we want to be invited to become a member. MacBride sent a letter saying that as long as partition existed, Ireland could not join. That letter, which was typical of him, was based on a very shallow view of our situation, but as a result of it, no invitation was issued and no invitation had ever come since. It was never suggested since that we should seek membership. His personality was such that he could not follow a consistent line and, no doubt, the weakness of his personality would, in time, have become more exposed and would eventually have lost support."

Paddy Smith Minister for agriculture who resigned from government in 1964 over Lemass's relationship with unions

"He was equally difficult with members of the party as he was with members of the government. They were always complaining at party meetings that when they went to talk to him on some matter he would abuse them. And at party meetings he was equally intolerant of criticism expressed by members of the party. He tried to browbeat any critic that would emerge in the party so that he certainly never played for popularity. And he certainly never succeeded in achieving it."



Seán Lemass portrait that hangs in Leinster House

Seán MacEntee

"Most of the developments that we undertook involving public expenditure he strongly opposed as minister for finance, because of his naturally conservative approach to these things, but very often he would make the most eloquent speech about the wisdom of the government concerning them without making any reference to the fact that he himself had not been in favour of them. He was very much a person who would be concerned to make the speech for the speech itself rather than to justify a decision which had been taken."

Charles de Gaulle

"I could not get to know de Gaulle at all. De Gaulle was always on stage, always conscious of the fact that he was appearing before the television camera of history. I only met de Gaulle once. I had little difficulty in maintaining a conversation with him, no difficulty in understanding what he asked even though it came through an interpreter and he could understand my point of view. He obviously wanted to understand and had the capacity to understand it, which meant I had no problem with personal relations. There was no chemical reaction, it was quite the reverse."



António de Oliveira Salazar Portuguese dictator 1932-1968

"I met Salazar. I liked him as a man. He may chop heads off his opponents but it had certainly never been proven that he changed his policy because of world pressure or any such reason. He was a mild man, a quiet man who reasoned his case well. He spoke English very well and

we had no problem with discussions. Salazar was a university professor but by the time I met him he had already been dictator in Portugal for 20 years. They did not have politics in our sense."

Dwight D Eisenhower

"The query in my mind about Eisenhower was not so much his unsuitability as a politician but his unsuitability as a great military commander, a tough army leader who would give clear decisive orders and stand no nonsense. He had not that type of personality. As a military commander he was very much more of a politician than a strategist."

Independents

"I have a poor opinion of Independents in the Dáil. They never influence the Dáil one way or the other. You do not know where they stand. Most of them rarely attend anyway. They are men who are elected to a job and are drawing a salary, but they will rarely take a political risk by expressing a view of any kind at all."

Co Roscommon

"There used to be a story told about a politician in the early days trying to run a communist scare at the elections, going down to a part of Co Roscommon and saying what would happen if the communists came over taking your land from you, but leaving you managing it and paying you a weekly salary each week to manage it. The idea of being paid a salary to manage the land was so popular among the small farmers in the area that they were out looking for these communists who were going to offer them a weekly salary for the managing of their lands."

Clientelism

"The right approach for the deputy who wants to establish public confidence in himself is to be quite honest, quite straight-

forward and to tell them that they are wasting their time on that particular operation – to tell them that this cannot be got or that it is undesirable that he should seek it for them. This often produces an electoral reward which is astonishing. Some of the deputies I know who have consistently topped the poll were deputies who refused to have anything to do with humbug, who refused to mislead their constituents in any respect whatsoever."

John Healy

Irish Times political journalist who wrote the Backbencher column and the book *No One Shouted Stop (The Death of an Irish Town)*, about the impact of emigration on his home town of Charlestown in Co Mayo



"There has been a lot of nonsense talked about this by urban theorists. Our friend in *The Irish Times* talks a lot of bilge. I am told they resented his articles intensely in Charlestown. They did not think of themselves as a dying community. They do not want to see themselves or anybody else in this light. He does not go back to Charlestown, I gather, having painted this picture [In the transcripts, Lemass crosses this last sentence out]."

Lemass on himself

"I like everything in the right place and I suppose I'm a creature of habit too because when I go away for a holiday I like to go to a hotel which I've been to before – I don't like going to new hotels. I like to do the things which I'm accustomed to doing and to do them even regularly. From time to time I used to have groups which I played cards with – I liked to have that fixed night every week so that you could organise your life on the assumption that you were not available for other things on that night. On the fishing trips, I go to the same hotel with the same people. I dislike having to go off to some strange place."

Seán Lemass A life in the public eye

July 15th, 1899

John Francis Lemass is born, the second child of John and Frances Lemass. The Lemass family are of Protestant Huguenot origin and own a draper shop on Dublin's Capel Street. The original name is Le Maistre.

1903-1915

Lemass attends Holy Faith primary school on Haddington Rd, then O'Connell's CBS on North Richmond St. He is a star pupil.

1916

Lemass and his older brother Noel join A Company, Third Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. Seán is one of the youngest participants in the Easter Rising and is stationed in the GPO for the week. He is arrested after the Rising but released two weeks later.

1917

Lemass is appointed as a Second Lieutenant in the Irish Volunteers.

1919-1921

Lemass active in the War of Independence. In his application for a military pension he confirmed he was in charge of one of the companies which assassinated British agents on Bloody Sunday. He was arrested and interned in Ballykinlar, Co Down

1922-1923

Lemass takes the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.

October 1923

The body of Noel Lemass is found in the Dublin Mountains. It is suspected that Treaty forces were behind his abduction and death. At the same time, Seán Lemass is elected to the standing committee of Sinn Féin without his knowledge, his first foray into politics.

August 1924

Lemass marries Kathleen Hughes.

November 1924

Lemass elected as a TD for Sinn Féin in Dublin South City constituency on an abstentionist ticket.

August 11th, 1927

Lemass enters Dáil Éireann for the first time as Fianna Fáil ends its abstentionist policy.

1932

Fianna Fáil win overall majority in the general election. Lemass is appointed as minister for industry and commerce

1939

Taoiseach Éamon de Valera appoints Lemass as minister for supplies during second World War.

1948

Fianna Fáil out of office after 16 years in power. Lemass appointed managing director of Fianna Fáil-supporting Irish Press Group.

1951-1954

Lemass is minister for industry and commerce again.

1957-1959

Lemass is appointed tánaiste and minister for industry and commerce.

1958

Economic Development is published – the first comprehensive plan for Irish economic development.

June 23rd, 1959

Seán Lemass becomes taoiseach at the age of 59.

1961

Fianna Fáil loses its overall majority and forms a minority government.

A policy of expansion that helped to save Ireland

Economy

Ronan McGreevy

1958 plan to reverse protectionism and open Ireland up had a galvanising effect on the economy

The 1950s was the darkest decade, marked by emigration of nearly 50,000 people a year. One of the great what-ifs of Irish history is what would have happened if Seán Lemass had become taoiseach earlier.

Would much of the stagnation of the 1950s have been avoided if the economic plan published by Lemass a year after he took over from Éamon de Valera had been introduced earlier?

Lemass himself was unsure when he was questioned a decade later by Dermot Ryan if he could have brought forward such a plan had he been taoiseach five or 10 years previously.

"It might be true," Lemass responded in recordings later transcribed by Ryan, "but it is very hard to be sure about this because my own thoughts were only developing at that time."

"Generally, I think that this could have happened earlier, but we could not really get down to the work of preparing an official programme for economic expansion until we were in government as a majority."

He criticised the inertia of de Valera in the 1950s whose "capacity to devise change had diminished and any proposals I brought forward were always subjected to debate rather than decision."

So Lemass decided to publish his own plans while Fianna Fáil was still in opposition. They appeared as supplements in the *Fianna Fáil-supporting Irish Press* in 1955 and 1956.

"This conception of programming began during the period when we were in opposition and I suppose it was largely my conception. I induced the party [Fianna Fáil] to accept my ideas," he said.

The plan, entitled *Economic Development*, published in 1958 and drawn up mostly by civil servant Ken (TK) Whitaker,



Emigration during that period was attributable to a lack of confidence in the future of the country

opened Ireland up to foreign investment and sought to dismantle the protectionist nature of the Irish State.

Protectionism had been central to Irish economic planning after independence, standing at the heart of Fianna Fáil's belief in Irish self-reliance. However, it was an increasingly discredited philosophy in the post-war boom era in Europe.

Gross inefficiencies

Protectionism had led to gross inefficiencies in Irish agriculture and industry, while foreign capital was distrusted as undermining Irish economic independence.

Economic Development had to work. The 1950s was a lost decade for the Irish economy. From 1951 to 1961, 408,000 people left Ireland and yet even the opportunities for those left behind were diminishing. Unemployment and social stagnation stalked the land. Many questioned the viability of a State which was just 35 years' old.

Economic Development was in many ways an act of desperation. "Everybody had lost confidence in the country," Lemass recalled.

"The whole movement for emigration during that period was attributable to a lack of confidence in the future of the country as there was inability to get employment here. If that could not have been reversed, then we would have been sunk, undoubtedly."

The idea of a National Development Plan was Fianna Fáil policy in the 1957 general election. Whitaker was given the task of preparing it.

Lemass was involved in it too but admitted it was not always easy. "I was one of the

people who was regarded as a party authority on economic policy, but this did not necessarily involve my deciding priorities. There were many contentious arguments between myself and the minister for agriculture and also on the financial side."

He adopted the Veroni plan, an economic plan that was produced in Italy in the 1950s to stimulate its post-war economy.

"I worked out a plan of my own. This was very crude and amateurish in many respects, but it did involve our commitment to the idea of programming for the future."

He believed the plan, which was contained in the *Fianna Fáil* manifesto of 1957, was one of the reasons the party won a thumping majority of nine in that year's general election.

Lemass said its publication in 1958 had a galvanising effect as Irish industry responded to it with relief.

Economic planning for Ireland had been a "revolutionary concept" but was accepted immediately by the trade unions, farmers and industrialists.

Lemass maintained the despair surrounding the country disappeared between 1960 and 1961.



June 1963 President John F. Kennedy visits Ireland

January 1965

Lemass makes a historic visit to Northern Ireland to meet Northern premier Captain Terence O'Neill

November 10th, 1966

Lemass announces his resignation as taoiseach.

May 11th, 1971

Lemass dies at the age of 71.